Two Minute Activities for Dementia Care

We often underestimate what a kind word, a touch, a smile, a sympathetic listening ear, or a compliment can do for mental health.

According to research, gentle physical touch is capable of regulating blood pressure and releasing endorphins (the pleasure hormones).

Words can also be life-sustaining and provide immense comfort in dementia care, but we often miss the opportunity to say them.

Engaging with Residents Outside Programmed Activities

During your working hours, you will see many clients outside of programmed activities; seize the opportunity and engage with them. It will only take a minute or two of your time and can transform someone's state of mind and lift their spirits more than you can imagine.

Be disciplined and don't stay longer than necessary; it's showing that you care that counts.
Here are a few ideas for short activities 'in-between' programmed activities.

1. Greet the client by name and make eye contact
2. Try on a couple of hats in front of a mirror with a client
3. Tell a client she/he looks 'Beautiful!' today
4. Show a client vivid colours in a garment/magazine and talk about it
5. Hold hands and step outdoors for some fresh air
6. Pick flowers in the garden together
7. Help a client to try on a new shade of lipstick
8. Give a client an impromptu shoulder massage
9. Play a quick game of ball catch
10. Evoke memories: e.g. "Tell more about your grandmother's farm!"
11. Tease: "I saw your boyfriend/girlfriend today!"
12. Tell a client you love her/him
13. Give spontaneous bear hugs
14. Try a new scented hand lotion on a client
15. If the background music is good, take a client for a dance
16. Blow bubbles together
17. Look at a landscape or animal calendar together
18. Ask for help: sorting books on a shelf, hanging clothes out to dry
19. Water plants together
20. Listen to the sound of a large shell
21. Wrap herbs/spices individually in fabric and ask a client to identify the smell
22. Comb, french braid or curl a client's hair
23. Read a few funny limericks
24. Remind a client about fruit and vegetables in season
25. Sing a Nursery Rhyme together

As Randi G. Fine said:
“No other form of communication is as universally understood as touch. The compassionate touch of a hand or a reassuring hug can take away our fears, soothe our anxieties, and fill the emptiness of being lonely”.
We'd love to hear your feedback!
How do you engage with residents in-between programmed activities?